

Cambian Potterspury Lodge School

Potterspury Lodge, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 7LL

Inspection dates

13–15 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Sixth form provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school no longer meets the independent school standards in full. Leaders have not maintained the quality of education and welfare noted in the previous inspection.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The school is not meeting pupils' needs well enough. Gaps in the provision of essential care services that were previously provided by the school have affected some pupils' welfare adversely and left them feeling unsafe.
- Checks on the health and safety arrangements are not sufficiently rigorous. There are serious breaches of the health and safety requirements which place pupils unnecessarily at risk.
- Staff have not had adequate training to manage pupils' complex behaviour needs sufficiently well. Some staff and pupils say that the behaviour of some pupils makes them feel unsafe.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good.
- The school's assessment system is confused and does not allow teachers to measure pupils' progress accurately.
- Pupils do not make good progress across all areas of their learning. Their progress in English is weaker than in other subjects.
- Pupils do not receive timely, impartial advice to prepare them for their next steps.
- Safeguarding is inadequate in the sixth form. However, other aspects of this provision are more successful. The curriculum meets students' needs and interests well.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher and head of education lead with resilience and determination.
- The head of education has brought new ideas that are leading to interesting and rewarding experiences for pupils.
- The curriculum meets pupils' interests well. Teachers are adept at finding topics that interest pupils.
- Pupils enjoy warm and supportive relationships with their teachers. The opportunities to develop their social skills are effective.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take urgent action to:
 - improve the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe by ensuring that records of all safeguarding incidents, and the information shared with authorities, are detailed and accurate
 - improve the health and safety of the building by ensuring that fire exits are unlocked and clearly signed, fire extinguishers are safely available and mould is removed from the primary classroom
 - ensure that the quality of training and support for staff carrying out health and safety checks enables them to carry out their roles effectively
 - ensure that the routine health and safety checks identify any further failings and that action is taken to remedy these swiftly.
- Improve the quality of leadership by:
 - developing the role of subject and phase leaders in the school so that these leaders have a greater overview of the areas they lead and are able to hold teachers fully to account for the progress pupils make
 - ensuring that all staff receive professional development that is appropriate to their needs and the needs of pupils
 - improving communication with parents, carers and pupils, particularly where this concerns changes to the staffing arrangements.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and raise pupils' outcomes by:
 - updating the assessment system in the primary phase, so that assessment accurately measures pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in the subjects they learn
 - ensuring that teachers use this information to set learning that builds on what pupils know and can do.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that any changes to the care and therapy services provided by the school are managed well and communicated effectively to pupils and parents
 - ensuring that staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and use the information in pupils' risk assessments to ensure that they manage pupils' behaviour consistently well and safely
 - improving the access to external, impartial careers advice and guidance so that pupils have a better understanding of the options available to them and are better prepared for their next steps
 - ensuring that pupils have opportunities to learn about fire safety through the programme for personal, social, health and economic education.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Standards in pupils' education, health and welfare have declined since the previous inspection. Leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are met in full. There are numerous failings in the school's health and safety arrangements.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is published on the school's website. However, the inspection found that it was not always implemented effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that there is adequate provision in place for pupils in need of psychological and therapeutic support. The school previously provided these services and some parents told inspectors that they chose the school because they believed it would meet their children's needs. Currently, the school is not able to ensure that pupils' education, health and care plans can be fully met. Some of these pupils have acute mental health needs. Several parents told inspectors that they have felt extremely let down by the lack of this crucial support.
- Changes to staffing have not been communicated well to pupils and parents. Some pupils have been left feeling anxious and distressed by these changes and are not able to attend school as a result.
- The school's health and safety policy is not implemented effectively. There are numerous breaches of the standards in this area. Staff carry out routine health and safety checks, but these are too lax. Serious health and safety issues have been overlooked.
- The systems to check and report on health and safety are not currently effective. Staff carrying out these roles are not suitably qualified and trained. They are not held to account sufficiently well for the quality of their work.
- Some pupils have complex and challenging behaviour needs. Staff have not always received enough information about these pupils before they started at the school and have not received sufficient training to ensure that they can manage the pupils' behaviour confidently. The lack of adequate training and support has left some staff feeling unsafe.
- The role of subject and phase leaders is still in development. Senior leaders have plans in place to ensure that these leaders take on greater responsibility for leading improvements, but it is too soon to judge the impact of this work.
- The school's development plan has identified appropriate priorities, but the success criteria by which improvements will be measured are not sufficiently sharp.
- Leaders have identified the weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment accurately. However, plans to improve this aspect of the school's work have not been fully implemented.
- Despite these weaknesses, the school has strengths. While some parents have felt let down by the lack of services, others speak highly of the opportunities their children have had since joining the school.
- The executive headteacher and head of education lead with energy and resilience. Their determination to bring about the necessary improvements was seen in their rapid response to some of the health and safety failings.
- The curriculum provides well for pupils' interests. Alongside English and mathematics,

pupils study a wide variety of subjects and the choice of extra-curricular activities is interesting and varied.

- The school caters well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, the well-thought-out assembly and tutor programmes cover a wide range of issues, from world religions to disability awareness. Pupils' artwork is a particular source of pride – rightly so. One parent described this area of the school's work as 'absolutely fantastic', explaining how the interesting projects had inspired and motivated her son.
- Pupils enjoy an interesting range of extra-curricular activities. The annual chess tournament was taking place during the inspection. There was palpable excitement among staff and pupils alike as they waited to find out who had won.
- The head of education has brought new and exciting ideas to enrich and enliven the curriculum. For example, pupils have enjoyed trips to the theatre and to the Houses of Parliament. During the inspection, pupils were observed rehearsing a play under the guidance of a professional theatre director. The confidence with which they expressed their honest opinions about one of the scenes was testament to how richly this experience had developed their social and communication skills.

Governance

- The directors have not held leaders to account adequately to ensure that the independent school standards are met in full.
- The directors did not take swift and effective action to ensure that there was adequate cover in place for the loss of clinical services or that the changes to staffing were communicated well to parents.
- The systems to report on the school's effectiveness are appropriate. For example, directors challenge the school's leaders to demonstrate their progress in meeting the action points on the school's development plan and ask for action to be taken in response to weaknesses. However, the targets on the development plan are not always specific enough for the directors to measure the success accurately.
- The directors took swift action to resolve some of the health and safety issues during the inspection. A health and safety expert from Cambian Education has begun working with the school and helpfully attended the final day of inspection. There are plans in place to improve the systems for reporting on health and safety issues and the training for staff. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this work.
- Directors invite a different pupil each time to make a presentation at their meeting. This enables them to hear first-hand about pupils' experiences of the school and is a further opportunity for pupils to develop their social skills and confidence in addressing others.
- At each meeting of the directors, leaders inform them about success stories as well as the key challenges. Directors are therefore well informed about what is going well and what issues need tackling.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The lack of provision to meet pupils' welfare needs and the poor communication about

staffing changes have left some pupils feeling unsafe and unable to attend school.

- Leaders have not ensured that safeguarding incidents are recorded in a timely and accurate fashion. Records of a serious safeguarding incident passed to the local authority were not sufficiently detailed.
- Health and safety checks are not sufficiently rigorous. The inspection found several concerning breaches of the standards for pupils' welfare, health and safety. For example, electrical sockets were found to be overloaded and not all electrical items had been subject to the necessary testing. One classroom contained signs of damp and mould. Out-of-date first aid items had not been replaced.
- During the inspection, several fire exit notices were missing, fire doors were locked and fire extinguishers had been removed. No plans were in place to ensure that all staff knew what to do in case of fire. For example, some fire extinguishers were locked away in a cupboard, but staff teaching nearby were not aware of this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not measure pupils' learning accurately in all phases of the school. In the primary phase, staff teach pupils the current national curriculum but assess their learning using the old national curriculum guidance. The assessment system is confusing and does not match current guidance. This means teachers are not able to know how well pupils are doing in their different subjects or set them challenging targets. Leaders agreed that the system needs simplifying.
- Pupils' individual education plans do not always have targets that are specific to their learning. It is not clear how staff can measure pupils' success against these targets.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are strong, caring and trusting. Because of this, most pupils settle well at the school and improve their attendance. For some who have spent significant periods of time out of school, this is a very significant achievement.
- Pupils told inspectors that staff understand their needs well. As one explained, 'They refine the educational experience to support and strengthen our achievement.'
- Teachers know the pupils well and adapt learning to their needs. For example, in a history lesson, the teacher skilfully and patiently guided pupils to understand the facts and context of the Second World War.
- Some teachers are effective in making links between different areas of pupils' learning. For example, in a food technology lesson, pupils were eagerly making hot cross buns. The teacher used the opportunity to explain the history behind the buns and linked this to their learning of religious education.
- Learning assistants provide effective support for pupils. They know the pupils well and are skilled at intervening to keep them focused on their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.

- The arrangements for safeguarding and for ensuring that the school meets health and safety standards are not effective. This places pupils unnecessarily at risk.
- Poor communication related to staffing changes has affected some pupils' welfare adversely and heightened their anxiety further.
- Risk assessments for pupils identify potential hazards and dangers but do not give clear information about how these risks should be managed.
- Some parents feel that staff are not able to manage pupils' mental health needs well enough.
- Pupils state that bullying sometimes happens but they trust their teachers to resolve any issues quickly.
- The school's programme of sport, art and extra-curricular activities contributes strongly to pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Many pupils successfully improve their confidence and social skills as a result of the experiences they have at the school.
- There are effective opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and leadership skills. The Year 11 pupils are rightly proud of the reputation they enjoy as mature and sensible young people who are good role models for others. As one explained, 'Everything we touch turns to gold!'
- The school council has been effective in bringing about improvements. For example, pupils can now have smoothies at break following a request from the council. Leaders show how they respond to requests so that pupils understand why a request has not been granted.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Some staff feel that they have not had enough training or support to cope with some pupils' complex and challenging needs. This leaves them feeling unsafe.
- A minority of pupils reported feeling unsafe when older pupils suffered 'meltdowns'. This was a view echoed by some parents. Some staff reported that the behaviour of pupils is a serious cause for concern.
- Staff do not use pupils' risk assessments consistently well to enable them to manage pupils' behaviour safely. This puts staff and pupils unnecessarily at risk.
- The school's records indicate that incidents of challenging behaviour are rising. Leaders believe that this is because they are recording such incidents more regularly.
- Staff do not always give pupils opportunities to reflect on and learn from their poor behaviour. This increases the likelihood that they may repeat the behaviour.
- Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy recently. Staff do not use the new policy consistently well. Leaders recognise that more training is needed to ensure that all staff fully understand and can apply the policy.
- Staff help to prepare pupils for their next steps by taking them to visit colleges and workplaces. However, older pupils have not yet had any external advice and guidance to

help them to decide their next steps. This means that they may not be fully informed about all of the options open to them.

- Many pupils have missed significant periods of schooling in the past and are successful in staying at school and improving their attendance. This is a substantial achievement.
- Tutor time at the start of the day is used well to help pupils settle in, discuss any issues they may have and feel calm and ready to learn.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils do not make good progress in all aspects of their learning. They make less progress in English, for example, than they do in other subjects.
- Teachers are not able to set targets to stretch and challenge pupils because they are not assessing them accurately. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that not all make consistently good progress.
- In some subjects, pupils make good progress because of the careful intervention and close support they receive from teachers and learning assistants.
- Pupils gain qualifications in a range of subjects, according to their interests, needs and abilities.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve pass grades in English and mathematics has remained constant over the last few years. For those pupils who have previously missed periods of schooling, this is a considerable achievement.
- Pupils are successful in improving their social skills. They develop in confidence as a result of the opportunities they have to try new, exciting and challenging experiences.
- The school is successful in ensuring that all pupils remain in education or move on to employment or training.

Sixth form provision

Inadequate

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. These arrangements affect the sixth-form provision also.
- Other aspects of the provision are more successful. The curriculum offers students the opportunity to improve their literacy and numeracy, as well as learning important life skills and gaining new qualifications. Students thrive as a result of a well-thought-out programme of activities.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from activities that develop their leadership skills. For example, they organise sporting events and help out in the school kitchen and in food technology lessons.
- The behaviour of students in the sixth form is, for the most part, better than that seen among younger pupils.
- Students make good progress in different aspects of their learning. Leaders have devised an effective means of tracking their learning, such as money management, food, hygiene

and health. This allows them to pinpoint students' next steps precisely.

- Staff help prepare students for their next steps by taking them to colleges and workplaces and talking to them about what to expect. However, in this academic year, students have not yet had impartial, external advice to help them plan for next year.
- In the last academic year, all students who left the school were successful in gaining a place at university, at college, on an apprenticeship or in work.
- Students take part in work experience placements according to their interests, needs and readiness. This year, this has included working in a local cafe and buying and selling computers. Staff are keen to build on these skills, for example by helping students to write business plans.
- There are effective opportunities to promote students' personal development and welfare. Students take part in physical activity and creative learning alongside their academic learning.

School details

Unique reference number	122136
DfE registration number	928/6039
Inspection number	10051883

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Education
Chair	Anne Marie Carrie
Headteacher	Lise Sugden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,223 to £67,777
Telephone number	01908 542 912
Website	www.cambriangroup.com
Email address	potterspurymail@cambriangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	2–4 February 2016

Information about this school

- Cambian Potterspurry Lodge is an independent residential special school. The school is situated in spacious grounds near to Towcester.
- The school caters for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. Many also have challenging behaviour and complex needs.

- The school uses one alternative provider, Urban Farm.
- The executive headteacher is also responsible for the education of pupils at Cambian Bletchley Park School. A head of education took up post in June 2016 and works full-time at Cambian Potterspurty Lodge School.
- The responsibility for governance lies with the directors of Cambian Education, the proprietor of the school.
- The school was last inspected in February 2016.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education in response to a complaint about the school's safeguarding arrangements. The inspection was aligned with the inspection of the school's residential provision.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher and head of education, as well as leaders of the sixth form, behaviour and assessment. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with the director of education and the director of clinical services from Cambian Education, and with the school's improvement partner. Inspectors spoke with teaching and support staff and with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors undertook tours of the school with the executive headteacher and with a health and safety manager from Cambian Education. Inspectors used these tours and other inspection activities to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Lessons in the primary and secondary phase were jointly observed with leaders. Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' books in a range of subjects.
- Sixteen responses to Parent View were taken into account. Several parents contacted inspectors by telephone and email. Inspectors looked at 20 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Deirdre Duignan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Stonier

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(b)(iii) encourages pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 8 Where section 87(1) of the 1989 Act[11] applies in relation to a school, the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 8(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and
 - 8(b) such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools or the National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Students under Eighteen by Further Education Colleges.

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour among pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, among other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour;
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 13 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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